

it rains when you're gone by TolkienGirl

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Summary: "There are so many people who are never coming back." - Kathleen Glasgow (A study in Steve Harrington. Rating for language, violence, implied sexual content.) (Steve/Nancy, Steve & Dustin)

it rains when you're gone

There are so many people who are never coming back. – Kathleen Glasgow

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Steve breaks his arm the day after his seventh birthday. It's at the beginning of summer, and it absolutely sucks.

Mostly it sucks because it's summer, and in all of ten seconds, skidding on gravel, three months of promise went up in smoke. But also, there's tiny window of suckage that seems to take over everything else. His dad had promised to teach him how to throw a football, but when he sees the cast on Steve's arm, he heaves out an impatient sigh and goes back to yelling at the phone in his home office.

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His mom frets over him about a third of the time, and isn't home for much of the rest of it. Steve has a hazy idea she wanted more kids, and Dad didn't, or maybe they couldn't have any more kids. He doesn't think about it much.

Mostly he just thinks about how to make this work, when his parents are gone on business trips and retreats and spa days and planned European vacations. How to make this—the empty house and the cold refrigerator glow and the TV humming like it can fill the space—*work*.

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Steve is hot.

Thank *God*.

He doesn't really get it—hates his nose and his chin and thinks his eyes are too big—but it doesn't matter. He's hot, and the girls are starting to go pink to their ears. He learns how to smile and figures out what the hell to do with his hair, he's captain of the basketball

team and everything is golden if he just faces outward, away from home.

He gets drunk for the first time and decides the headache's worth it.

He "does it" with Amy Kramer in the guest bedroom at her parents' house and feels weird for about a week. She transfers the next month, and he doesn't miss her. It's kind of a small mercy, really. It gets easier, with Laurie, with Becky. It's like he's punching through the hollowness and eventually he'll punch out of it, maybe make it go away altogether, or just keep it in contained to the in-between of drunk and sober.

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His dad doesn't hit him a lot. He's an asshole, not a monster.

There's a difference.

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Nancy Wheeler looks as pretty and perfect and untouchable as a porcelain doll. He wants her, because no one has her.

The falling in love thing happened afterwards, and it would have been a stupid idea if it had been an idea at all.

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Sometimes he looks in the mirror, looks himself right in the eyes, and mouths, *shithead*. Because he is. His mom loves him like he supposes a lot of moms love their kids—kind of there, kind of not. She doesn't like when he's sick; she always finds an excuse to be out of the house. He usually just wraps himself in blankets and watches *Happy Days*.

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Secret is: if you have a posse, and great hair, and a car, you can do pretty much anything.

Secret is: anything can be lost.

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He's seventeen, he's eighteen, he's certain: he's going to love Nancy for the rest of his life. She loved him before, and she must love him after. He's not smart enough to read between the lines, he knows, so he'll just trust to her smiles and her soft lips, and call love like he sees it.

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He can go work for his dad. He could go to college, but it's a stretch.

Nancy *might* marry him. He wishes he could be sure that she'd wait for him, like something in him is always waiting for her.

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When there's a monster in town, your own petty problems don't matter.

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The world ain't shit.

...*'like' we're in love?*

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Steve Harrington, ladies and gentlemen.

Steve goddamn Harrington.

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The air is prickling his skin with cold. The heater in his car is kind of fried, and he keeps meaning to get it fixed but the last month has been about a lot more than literal mechanics. His parents wanted to know what the hell happened to his face.

They're never going to ask if he has nightmares, or where he was, or what he was doing when everything fell apart.

What's that called again? Small mercies.

He watches Dustin go inside, all wide-eyed confidence, and Steve's just glad the kid's not seven, just hopes this dance doesn't go to shit in all of ten seconds.

And then—

Nancy.

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Through the window, always through the glass. She looks less like a doll, more like an angel, and Steve feels every line and ache and memory of that hollowness.

He thinks it's pretty likely that she was never really his. It was just an idea. Steve curls his cold fingers around the wheel, watches until Dustin disappears, shoulders high and happy, watches Nancy whirl away into the crowd.

Everything wells up—but Steve shakes it off, and laughs at himself because there's nobody else to do it for him.

Then he drives into the cold darkness, skids over gravel, and waits for summer like it's ever coming back.